

The 914th Airlift Wing

NIAGARA

FRONTIERSMAN

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NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION

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Female Firefighter climbs ladder of success and is named the 914 AW FWP Woman of the Quarter
See story on page 4



Commanders Column

By: Col. Wade Farris
Commander, 914AW

Are you ready to go?? I've been asking you that question for over a year now and I believe most of you are ready. Now, let me ask another question. Is your family ready for you to go when called? If not, this can have serious implications on your readiness to deploy as well as your ability to do your job once there. Before the call comes, you should make sure you take care of certain very important items.

First, have you completed all the medical requirements for your family? Are they enrolled in DEERS? Have you checked into the TRICARE program and brought all that info home to your spouse and then discussed the impact on your family? How about your SGLI, is it up to date (current beneficiaries listed with correct addresses) and does your spouse know the details?

Second, how about legal issues? Hopefully, after all the reminders, you have updated your will and accomplished a power of attorney. If not, get it done so your loved ones don't have the legal hassles associated with your lack of a will or trying to get things done at home while you are thousands of miles away.

Next, are all your financial affairs in order? If you pay all the bills every month, have you shown your spouse how to do it? Have you taken time to figure out how much money you will make if activated, how that compares with

your present income and then discussed it with your spouse? What about home mortgages, car payments, and credit card bills? Do you have the letters ready to send to these companies requesting a reduction to 6% interest? This could mean a significant reduction in monthly expenses and less worry for you and your spouse if you are deployed. Check with your bank, a power of attorney may not be enough to let a family member do your banking.

Finally, have you squared things up with your employer? Does he or she know you may be deploying soon so they can find a temp for you? If they have issues with your Reserve commitment have you made contact with local ESGR reps?

If you can't honestly say you have taken care of all of the above, then get on it. I DO NOT want a phone call from an irate spouse telling me about some issue YOU should have addressed before you left! I suggest you spend some time in the coming days and weeks to take care of business and your family so you can give your best to country if and when you are called.



NIAGARA FRONTIERSMAN

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By: Dr. James G. Roche
Secretary of the Air Force
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Air Force Chief of Staff

On Saturday, Feb. 1, our nation and the world lost seven courageous, talented individuals when the Space Shuttle Columbia Orbiter (STS-107) experienced catastrophic failure 15 minutes prior to landing at Kennedy Space Center, Fla. Among these brave astronauts were two officers from the Air Force family: Col. Rick Husband, mission commander, from Amarillo, Texas; and Lt. Col. Michael Anderson, payload commander, from Spokane, Wash.

On behalf of the men and women of the U.S. Air Force, we offer our deepest condolences to our Air Force family members Evelyn Husband and her children Laura and Matthew, and Sandra Anderson and her children Sydney and Kaycee. We stand together with all Americans in offering our prayers for the families, friends, and co-workers of those lost in this tragic accident. We will never forget their great contributions to our nation and the world.

While we are deeply saddened by this tragic loss, we are also very proud of the Air Force team that has tirelessly assisted in the response to this national tragedy.

Air Force Space Command units from Peterson, Buckley, and Patrick AFBs provided tracking data as part of the accident investigation. Tanker units from Birmingham, Ala., and fighter squadrons from Texas and Louisiana supported a number of search and recovery actions. We've also flown communications support out of Texas and Oklahoma and provided airlift support from McGuire AFB. Barksdale AFB provided part of the Initial Response Teams supporting the Texas Department of Public Safety in recovery efforts, and continues to function as the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Consequence Management Operations Center and NASA Shuttle Recovery Center. The Air Force family will continue to offer support to the astronaut's families, DoD, NASA, FEMA, and state organizations.

We grieve for our friends and co-workers, but we also join the rest of the world in celebrating seven lives well lived and promise to continue to support the space program's noble mission of discovery.

May God bless the grieving families, our men and women in uniform, and the United States of America.

Maxwell reservist attends State of the Union address



MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – A flight nurse with the 908th Airlift Wing, Maxwell AFB, Ala., attended the president's State of the Union address in the company of the first lady Laura Bush.

Capt. Maureen Allen joined members of Congress and special guests on Capitol Hill as the president spoke before a worldwide, television audience. Allen was picked by the White House because she volunteered to go overseas for Operation Enduring Freedom, Air Force Reserve Command officials said. She was notified of her selection Jan. 27.

"It was a nice birthday present and an unbelievable opportunity," she said following the address, noting that she turned 37 on Jan. 28. "In fact, it was one of the more rewarding experiences I have had in my 18 years of Air Force service."

Allen is a flight nurse examiner with the Reserve's 908th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron and has more than 500 flying hours aboard C-130 Hercules aircraft.

The native of North Tonawanda, N.Y., served in Afghanistan from June to September 2002 as a medical crew director on a three-person team that treated people injured in combat and noncombat situations throughout the region. That included aeromedical evacuation flights in and out of Kandahar and Bagram air bases in Afghanistan, as well as remote locations in Uzbekistan.

She took care of U.S. combat troops, coalition and friendly forces, civilians, and detainees by evaluating each patient's condition, prescribing treatment and ensuring the highest standards of medical care were provided in-flight. (AFRC News Service from Air Force Print News and a 908th AW news release)

Editor's Note: Capt. Allen is a former member of the 914 AW as well as a WNY native.

Law protects benefits of called-up private sector employees

WASHINGTON – In mid-January, Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao unveiled updated information to help reservists

preparing to be deployed understand their rights to pension and health benefits coverage available through private sector employers.

"Military reservists should have confidence that while they are serving their country on active duty their job pension and health benefits will continue for their families," Chao said. "That is why we have developed information to familiarize reservists and family members with the federal law that protects these benefits."

"Many troops will be called to serve. This represents a great sacrifice by reservists, guardsmen and employers who must carry on without the services of these valuable employees during our fight against terrorism and to preserve the freedom cherished by Americans."

"Frequently Asked Questions for Reservists Being Called to Active Duty" provides basic information about how retirement benefits of reservists are protected during service to their country. It also describes the rights of family members to maintain health coverage, including the right to keep coverage under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, as well as the various health benefit options available to family members.

A copy of the questions and answers can be obtained on the department's Web site at www.dol.gov/pwba. The public also may call with questions through PWBA's toll-free employee and employer hotline at (866) 275-7922 or electronically at www.askpwba.dol.gov (Air Force Reserve Command News Service from a DOL news release)

Reserve gets nearly 4% of Air Force budget request

WASHINGTON – The president's proposed defense budget for next year seeks \$3.5 billion in funding and an end-strength of 75,800 reservists for Air Force Reserve Command.

The fiscal 2004 request, which covers the fiscal year starting Oct. 1, 2003, asks for 200 more Air Force reservists.

Senior Department of Defense officials announced the overall defense budget request of \$380 billion Jan. 31. The Air Force is to get \$93.5 billion.

AFRC has traditionally received funding from three separate appropriations – operations and maintenance, reserve personnel, and military construction.

However, this year's budget request has a significant twist. For the first time since the advent of the Total Force in the early 1970s, the budget request for reserve personnel funding is contained in the active duty's military personnel appropriation. Most of the AFRC portion of the FY04 President's Budget request – \$2.179 billion – is earmarked for O & M funds to train, organize and administer the command. The Reserve received \$2.15 billion in O & M funds in FY03.

Another \$1.33 billion is identified in Budget Activity 7 of the active-duty military personnel appropriation for Reserve requirements. This funding includes a military pay raise ranging from 2 percent to 6.25 percent, targeted by rank and years of service, and the addition of 162 full-time Active Guard and Reserve people. The requested reserve personnel appropriation represents a \$94.9 million increase compared to that received for the FY03 reserve personnel appropriation.

Requested funding for military construction in FY04 is \$44.3 million, which includes seven major projects in three states.

In this fiscal year, the Reserve is getting \$67.2 million for military construction, which includes major and minor projects, planning and design, and funding to cover judgments to contractors on construction projects in prior years. Under his FY03 budget, the president had recommended \$31.9 million, but Congress tacked \$35.3 million more onto the request to fund 11 more major projects.

In addition, Congress added another \$12.5 million to help the Reserve in FY03 – \$10 million in the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation and \$2.5 million in aircraft procurement.

Congress uses the President's Budget as a blueprint to draft legislation. After both houses of Congress approve their version of the bill, it is sent to the president to be signed into law. (AFRC News Service)



914 AW Federal Women's Program Woman of the Quarter (Jan - Mar 03)

Christina Panek - Firefighter

Christina is a Reservist with the 914 SPTG/ CEF and has recently served as a temporary DoD GS-05 Civilian Fire fighter with the Niagara Falls ARS Fire Department. She was nominated by her civilian supervisor, Kevin Hodgson.

Christina was born in Buffalo, NY and currently resides in Sanborn. After attending Erie County Community College for two years, Christina enlisted in the A.F. Reserve Program. Her father was a reservist for many years in the 914th Communications Squadron and also in Family Support.

She chose Firefighting as her career because she wanted a job that would challenge her, and where she could help other people. She received her technical training at Goodfellow AFB, TX.

One of the challenges she faced in her career is the physical demand of the job. She also felt that she had to "prove herself" to be accepted by the other all male firefighters. But she considers a "handful of the guys" to be her mentors and role models.

Christina also knows the challenges of being a single working mother. She credits her parents and her friends for being very supportive during her long hours at the station.

The most memorable events of her career were the High Angle Rescue training, repelling from the training smokehouse, and Confined Space training.

One event that caused her some embarrassment, but that she now laughs about is the time she hit a parked car while receiving training driving the engine truck.

Her future career goal is to become a full time firefighter.

Christina thinks the people at Niagara are great. The only thing that she would change is for her to become a full time employee.

Her best piece of advice to other Federal women employees: You can accomplish anything you put your heart into. Just don't give up!



Photos (including cover) By: Mr. Kevin Hodgson

Key Information for Activated Reservists

It's happened. You've been called to active duty. Now all the planning pays off. Personal and family readiness will give you the peace of mind to do your job while away.

Most people know about the basic benefits of activation, such as pay, full commissary use, and health care. Below is a quick reference for answers to questions many activated reservists have.

Family Support

Leave things as stable as possible at home. Most family members feel some sense of anger or loss at separation. It's not fun, but it's normal. The best thing to do is deal with the feelings. Communicate. You may want to plan a going-away event, so you can leave with warm memories. The Family Support Program offers information, assistance, and support for your loved ones while you are away.

Job Rights

Two basic rights granted to you by Federal law are the right to deploy and the right to return to your job. Your employer must let you report to your military station when you receive orders. You cannot be forced to take personal or sick leave while performing military duty. You should communicate with your employer about when you have to report, and how long your orders are for. Give them a point of contact number, and let them know if your situation changes. If you have any problems on the employer end, call (ESGR).

Financial Help

As an activated reservist, you are eligible for emergency aid from the Air Force Aid Society for such things as basic living needs, car repairs, childcare problems, serious illness or death of an immediate family member, and other problems associated with an activation.

Medical Benefits

All active-duty service members are authorized to use military medical treatment facilities and are enrolled in TRICARE Prime health care plan.

Pay

For information regarding pay and travel entitlements, please call the FM office at 716-236-2292.

ID Cards and Emergency Information

Your family members must have ID cards and be enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) to receive medical and other benefits.

Legal

For wills, powers of attorney, and special powers of attorney, call the base Legal Office at 716-236-2133.

Career Enhancement

Deserving Airman Commissioning Program

The Support Group Executive Officer Position under the 914th Mission Support Group is open under the Deserving Airman Commissioning Program. Obtain the application package through your First Sergeant or in Bldg 800, Room 106, Career Enhancement Section. Applications must be submitted to TSgt Calarco, Career Enhancement **NLT Sat of the April 2003 UTA**.



First Sergeant Openings



Applications are now being accepted for 4 First Sergeant Openings - 914th Logistics Readiness Squadron, 914th Communications Squadron, 914th Aircraft Maintenance, 914th Security Forces Squadron and the 328th Airlift Squadron. Obtain the application package through your First Sergeant or in bldg 800, Room 106, Career Enhancement Section. Applications must be submitted to TSgt Calarco, Career Enhancement **NLT COB of the APRIL 03 UTA**.



virtualMPF
Air Force Personnel Center • Randolph AFB, Texas

The Virtual MPF is available to all Air Force Personnel. Just visit the website (http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/km/vMPF_Portal/vMPF_Portal.htm) and you will be asked to establish a password based on your SSAN, MAJCOM, DOB, DOR, and PAY DATE. Once this is established you will be able to access your MILITARY RECORDS (i.e. Awards and Decorations). If you have questions or concerns feel free to contact TSgt Calarco at (716) 236-2193.



The base continues to support deployments of Western New York units overseas. This C-5 Galaxy recently departed carrying equipment for members of the Mobil Inshore Undersea Warfare Unit 214 (Naval Reserve) from Buffalo.

914 AW HOTLINE

914AWHotline@niagarafalls.af.mil
or
Global Address Book
under 914 AW Hotline

The Hotline will be used for problems, issues, suggestions and or ideas that have a wing-wide impact. All senders will remain anonymous and issues having wing-wide impact will be addressed in Commander's Call or future additions of this paper unless requested otherwise.



Pictured at a deployed location with this "hand"-made flag are MSgt. Tim Szymanski (standing) and MSgt. Robert Healy of the 914th Security Forces Squadron. A local after school program sent their support to the troops with letters and a homemade handprint flag. The flag was then signed by deployed members of the various Armed Forces and sent back home to the school.

What's New in Services?

By: Mr. Jerry Slipko
914th Services Marketing Director

Two lucky Falcon Club members won prizes in the "Electrified Membership Drive". Charles Truitt Jr. won the Grand Prize which was a Sony 32TS1 Plasma television including a Bose home entertainment system. The 3rd place prize which was a Denon Prime Sound Series Personal Component System was awarded to Jill Barker Epstein. Thanks to First USA and Air Force Clubs for their sponsorships, "No Federal Endorsement of Sponsors Intended". As you can see, it pays to be a club member!

The Air Force has expanded their Youth of the Year Program to include one AFRC and one ANG youth award. Each AFRC installation may nominate one high school student to compete for the award.

The AFRC winner will receive an all expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. from 24-27 Jun 03. Either HQ USAF/CV or CVA will present plaques at an impressive Pentagon Youth of the Year ceremony, followed by various educational tours.

Youths ages 14-18 may compete for the award. The Youth of the Year must demonstrate leadership and service in the home and family, in school activities, and in planning and implementing community activities. The nominee must possess high moral standards and submit an essay on why a post high school education is important to him or her. The essay must be submitted to the 914th Services Department by 1 Apr 03. For more information and to pick up an application, please contact Jerry Slipko at extension 3061.

Spring Break is around the corner, so if you need to entertain your children during their Spring Break, you may want to stop by the Services IT&T office to find out what discount tickets are available. You can save a lot of money by purchasing tickets through the office. The great

thing about it is that there is no sales tax. The office is located upstairs in the Dining Hall, Building 506 and is open 0800-1600 Monday through Friday.

In addition, the Services IT&T Office has purchased a pair of tickets to six of the Toronto Blue Jays games. Toronto's opponents for the selected games are: NY Yankees (three games), Boston Red Sox, Oakland A's, and Chicago Cubs. There are special promotions at the stadium for some of these games. The tickets are going to be sold on a first come, first serve basis. The tickets are \$20.00 for the pair and the seats are in left field at the Skydome. For more information about these tickets, please contact the Services IT&T office at 236-3367.

For those who are bowlers, the Annual Armed Forces Bowling Championship tournament will be held in March. For details, please contact Mike Williams at 236-2450.

Cookies Career Corner

By: SMSgt. Robert Cook
Career Assistance Advisor, 914 AW

This month's article deals with a retirement issue. What do I do with my SGLI Insurance when I retire?

I am sure many of you prospective retirees are not sure what your options are. Here are some general information guidelines to follow when you separate or retire from military service.

You have 120 days of free coverage of SGLI insurance upon your separation or retirement from military service. Within this time frame you can convert your SGLI to VGLI (Veterans Group Life Insurance).

VGLI is a program of post-separation insurance, which provides for the conversion of SGLI to VGLI in 5-year renewable term insurance periods.

Members with full-time SGLI coverage are eligible to apply for VGLI upon release from service. To obtain VGLI, an eligible member must submit an application to the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance with the required premium during the 120 days following separation.

An application can still be submitted up to one year after SGLI coverage terminates, however, during that period, evidence of good health must be submitted.

VGLI is issued in multiples of \$10,000 up to \$250,000, but not for more than the amount of SGLI the member had in force at their time of separation from service. VGLI premiums are based upon the separating member's age. The following website will give you more information on VGLI.

www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/VGLI/VGLI.htm

If you don't have access to a computer you can always write to the following address for general information about government insurance:

Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance
290 West Mount Pleasant Avenue
Livingston, New Jersey 07039

The following address is for New VGLI applications:

OSGLI
PO BOX 5000
Millville, New Jersey 08332-9928

Montgomery GI BILL (Chapter 1606) has been extended from the current 10 years to 14 years.

This change was effective October 1, 2002, and applies only to persons who became eligible for the Montgomery GI BILL - Selected Reserve (chapter 1606) on or after October 1, 1992.

Reserve members that had their benefits terminated on or after October 1, 2002 because of your 10 year delimiting date, you should contact their school to insure they have given VA current enrollment data.

If you are currently receiving benefits or your 10 year delimiting date has not passed, no action is required on your part as HQ AFRC we will automatically extend your delimiting date to the proper 14 year date.



Pictured above: African - American Heritage Dinner guest speaker Mr. Kevin Cottrel.

African-American history month celebration a success!

To celebrate African-American History Month in February, an evening program was held in the Falcon Club. Guest speaker Mr. Kevin Cottrel gave a enjoyable and informative presentation on the rich (local) history of the Underground Railroad.

In addition to the evening program, the base chapel hosted a special afternoon church service to include an inspirational pastor and joyful choir from the Second Baptist Church.

Many thanks to all who contributed in making this celebration a success.



The Second Baptist Church Howard T. Reese Fellowship Choir.



Above: MSgt. Mark Blue leads the congregation in song.

Thank you and farewell...

While we recognize that very few people will rise to the level of a Dr. Martin Luther King, we can all make significant contributions to the world around us. I am reminded of a visit by General Leon Johnson. We discussed, then, TSgt. Mark Blue (now MSgt). General Johnson looked at MSgt Blue and said, "TSgt Blue is the kind of leader the Air Force Reserve needs. He is a leader in both the military and civilian community!" But there are others here that have also positively impacted our base and this community.

There are a group of leaders that need to be recognized for their contributions to the Air Force Reserves and the local community: The 914 AW Heritage Observance Committee (HOC). This year's African American Celebration not only went off beautifully, but also proved to be educational, inspirational, and tasty. A special thanks goes out to A1C Shavon Smith for her help in the "Underground Railroad" program and the 914 Services organization for the delightful lunch (Saturday) and amazing displays.

Additionally, I would like to thank the members of the Second Baptist Church Choir for being here with us and sharing their wonderful voices, and Major Derrick Harris for the thoughtful and inspirational message: Building Bridges. There are too many others to mention here, but I will ensure that they are appropriately recognized for their outstanding service. Again, thank you.

As of March 1, 2003, I will be going on active duty to work in AFROTC. When I leave this base, my heroes will be here at the 914 AW. Please let me encourage you to take a minute and thank these dedicated reservists (HOC) for their efforts and may the Lord bless.

Major Kerry Dunham
914 AW/ME



Photos By: TSgt. David Allen

Deployment offers tax options; not filing is not one of them

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Mobilized Air Force reservists deploying overseas are not automatically excused from filing their federal income tax return, according to Air Force Reserve Command staff judge advocate officials here.

Deploying reservists have four options when it comes to filing taxes. They can file before they leave, authorize their spouse or trusted friend to sign and file for them, have their non-military or non-deploying spouse sign and file their joint tax return on their behalf, or use an extension if authorized.

Before deploying: If reservists have not received their Form W-2 in the mail, they can access it online by using a personal identification number via "My Pay Account" on the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Web site at <https://emss.dfas.mil/mypay.asp>.

Most active-duty locations offer a tax assistance program. Members can electronically file their returns and opt for direct deposit of any refund into their checking accounts.

Authorizing another to file: To allow someone else to sign and file their return, reservists must:

- Be unable to sign the return because of disease or injury,
- Be absent from the United States for a period of at least 60 days before the due date for filing the return, or
- Get permission from the Internal Revenue Service office in their area to have another person file on their behalf.

They can authorize their agent to sign and file by using a special power of attorney or by using IRS Form 2848, which is available on the Web at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-fill/f2848.pdf> (instructions at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i2848.pdf>).

Filing a joint return: In this situation, a special power of attorney or IRS Form 2848 is not required. Married couples filing separate returns cannot take advantage of this option.

Using an extension: Deployed military people can usually take advantage of a filing extension for service in a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area. Before claiming these extensions, reservists should check with a tax preparer or a legal assistance officer to ensure that the area where they are deployed has been declared a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area.

To find out what a state requires when reservists are deployed, they should consult with a tax preparer or a legal assistance officer. Some states have rules that are similar to the federal rules. (AFRC News Service)



Niagara Frontiersman



Photo By: MSgt. Peter Borys

The Niagara Frontiersman is printed for unit members like newly promoted Colonel Merle Hart, 914th Operations Group Commander, who on 30 January 2003 received his wings from Colonel Wade Farris, 914 AW Commander.

Four other lieutenant colonels (with future pin-on dates) from the 914th Airlift Wing were also selected in the 2003 colonel promotion board. They are: James Germain, Walter Gordon, Patricia Jarmuz, Joseph Trippy.



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fight for his freedom and that
of his neighbor."*

- Harold Ickes